PUBLIC SCHOOL VERSE 1919–1920

AN ANTHOLOGY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY JOHN MASEFIELD

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PUBLIC SCHOOL VERSE

BY JOHN MASEFIELD

A POEM AND TWO PLAYS

LOLLINGDON DOWNS, AND OTHER POEMS

THE FAITHFUL: A PLAY

PHILLIP THE KING, AND OTHER POEMS

THE DAFFODIL FIELDS

DAUBER: A POEM

GOOD FRIDAY: A PLAY IN VERSE

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ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

PUBLIC SCHOOL VERSE
1919—1920

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With an Introduction by
John Masefield

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PREFACE

THIS scheme originated with Mr. H. G. Pollard, to whom the Editors' thanks are due: and it aims primarily at bringing into a larger circle of criticism, whether kind or harsh, and of a wider competition those writers who are most likely to take advantage, at a critical stage in their development, of such an opportunity. We have reluctantly refused several delightful verses from boys of ten or twelve as being outside our intention, and as belonging to childhood rather than boyhood: and we have had to sacrifice a good many poems that were partly good in order to maintain an absolute rather than a relative standard of excellence. Some of the objections that have been raised Mr. John Masefield has answered in his introduction: the rest we hope will be dissipated by the quality and the spontaneity of the work itself.

Our especial thanks are due to Mr. John Masefield, whose advice and help have been of the greatest value, and also to those Masters and Boys of various schools who have added to the material available, and helped in its selection: and to Headmasters and Editors of School Magazines in particular.

It is hoped that a second volume may appear next year. All contributions should be sent by November 20, 1920, to:

THE EDITORS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL VERSE,
C/o HOLYWELL PRESS,
OXFORD.

A stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed if the return of unaccepted MSS. is desired. All boys who had not left school by January 1, 1920, are eligible as contributors, provided—in the case of those who leave during this year—that their entries were written while they were still at school.

We appeal again for the support of Masters and Boys—a support which has already proved so valuable: for it is desired to make future numbers as representative as possible; to maintain the quality and at the same time to increase the quantity of the verse; which we believe, with their assistance, may well be possible.

MARTIN GILKES.
RICHARD HUGHES.
P. H. B. LYON.

OXFORD, 1920.

NOTE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS are due to the Editor of the *Saturday Westminster Gazette* for permission to republish one poem; and to the Editors of the forthcoming *Perse School Anthology* for similar courtesies.

Contributors are recommended to join the Incorporated Society of Authors, of 1 Central Buildings, Tothill Street, Westminster, S.W.1; so that they may submit to the Society all proposals received by them for the publication of their poems.

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INTRODUCTION

THE arts are the honey of life made by the enjoyers of life for the delight of living people. No man can condemn the arts without condemning himself as being partly dead. Perhaps no man insensitive to the arts has ever reached any pitch of human eminence. Knowledge without beauty is dead, power without style is anarchy.

Out of the arts come delight, colour, warmth, sweetness, wisdom, glory, and transfiguration. From love of the arts come happiness in life and a greatness of memory after life. From contemning of the arts come, firstly, a shabby life, then a hopeless death, and lastly the world's contempt.

These things seem to me to be indisputable; and, being so, I ask myself where we English stand in this matter of the arts; what is the measure of our delight in them; what do we care for these finer kinds of knowledge?

Some, wishing to exalt their own peoples, have decried all our achievements in every kind of art. Writers of some races, who have not yet produced any brain of eminence, have written that we are dull. Malice is usually the child of envy and ignorance, with envy the begetter. Our achievement in every kind of art confutes that charge. We have produced a great body of most delicate, tender, truthful and humorous art, that will answer for us when the nations are weighed. In music, in landscape and portrait painting, in poetical creation of all

kinds, in the building of ships and of houses, as well as in all the profounder and finer ways of science, we have equalled the best in the world. This is not a boast, but a matter of easy proof. There is the work for the world to see. By our fruits men may know us. Purcell, Girtin, Turner, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dickens, Trollope; the China Clippers; the Tudor and the Georgian styles of building; Newton, Darwin, and Huxley, are not the products of a dull race, but of a race with delicate, profound capacities for lovely and ordered thinking, as well as for mastery.

I do not believe that a nation's great men are produced out of the current of the nation's life, as sports or protests, cuckoos in the sparrow's nest, hawks in the hen-roost. I believe that they have in full measure the capacities proper to all the race, and that they do well what the rest of the race does a little. I believe that the mind of this country is deeply and truly sensitive to the arts which our great men have profoundly practised.

But in spite of this sensitiveness to the arts, and the glory of our achievement in them, it seems to have been not long ago a habit here to think and speak slightingly of the arts and artists. I do not know why it should have been so, nor when the habit began with us. One is tempted to say (with others) that it came to this land with Puritanism; or with the German kings and the Hanoverian rat; or with industrial development; or with the French Revolution. It is so easy to say that, at some time in our

history, art and artists became suspect, as dangerous to Church, Court, Commerce, or State. Perhaps all the causes mentioned have helped in different ways to this end. But whatever causes have helped, all have been intensified by our national shyness. We do not like to speak of the things dearest to us; we do not wear our hearts on our sleeves.

Some have said that this slighting of art and artists came from the English Public School system, as it flourished between 1860 and 1900. That system (according to some) left the setting of too many standards to the boys themselves, so that the schools tended to become places where boys might pipe "as though they would never be old," rather than places where they might equip themselves, up to the capacity of men, for high endeavour and delight. Perhaps this cause also helped.

I do not know who could have been to blame for this; surely no one person, nor class of persons, but rather a demand or instinct in the race, shutting itself against an individual for the sake of a type. The type, when made, was a fine one—sound-bodied, full of courage, honest, just, good-tempered, practical, silent. It was ignorant of the arts. "A whole world of delight was closed to its senses five." The young gentleman of the type was a duller man than the young gentleman in Chaucer, who could portray and write and sing as well as joust. He was a boor to the young gentleman of the Renaissance, who spoke three languages and had "swum in a gundaloe." He was less of a person than the young

gentleman of the eighteenth century, who had a library, and went to sit to Sir Joshua.

Some may say, "Perhaps; yet, for all that, we would rather have had our young gentleman than any of those." So would I, but I would have had him with their perfections. There is no need to exclude the powers and delights of man from a man's equipment. Our young man would have been a finer fellow, and his world a finer world, had he cared for the finer kinds of thought and knowledge.

Now that we have escaped from hell, we relish the delights of free men with greater zest. In this great time of returning peace we turn openly and gladly to the arts for refreshment and exercise. There is no thought now of contemning art and artists, but an eagerness to welcome both. Everywhere our young men and women are creating. In our schools there is a new spirit, or passion, for the enjoyment of the arts. Some of the fruits of that spirit are in this little book.

This is the first of the volumes of *Public School Verse*. Here are poems selected from a mass of material sent in by the boys of many public schools all over the country. Fourteen schools are represented here. The quality of the work submitted has been good; that of the work chosen is high. There are at least six poets represented here whose future work will be watched carefully by lovers of poetry. I praise the young poets for their achievement, and I praise those masters and teachers of English who have encouraged and helped

such work. They may well be proud. They are fostering what may well become the greatest of all our schools of poetry.

Some have said: "It is nonsense, teaching boys to write poetry. It will make them moonstruck madmen, and unfit them for life." I would say in answer that poetry cannot be taught. Poetry is a mixture of common-sense, which not all have, with an uncommon sense, which very few have. No one can "teach" any such thing. But delight in poetry, one of the deepest of the delights of men, is in everyone and can be trained and encouraged to the enlargement of all enjoyment. By delighting in poetry, and by endeavouring to write it, men obtain keys to the universe and to themselves. They learn the language of their race, and the passionate thoughts of their race, to love the one and live by the other. These are things well worth the fostering.

Others have said: "Boys, whose work is printed in these collections, will have their heads turned with vanity. They will cease to work for the professions designed for them. They will 'take to literature.'"

The heads of boys are less easily "turned with vanity" than the heads of young men. Even the poetical boy has many outlets for his energy besides his poetry. Poetry is not his life, but another enjoyment added to his life, as it ought to be. His life is a boy's life, comradeship and fun, interspersed with discipline. As to "ceasing to work" for professions, surely the mind will always work best at the subjects best suited to it. As to "taking to

literature," I've no doubt that some of them will. Some people do, in all generations, thank God!

It has been a delight to me to find so much good writing and feeling for good writing in the boys of this time. I look forward eagerly to a second volume. Headmasters and English Masters have generously helped our scheme, by making it known to the boys. I hope that before long they will have their reward in finding their boys as proud of seeing their school represented by a poem in a book as they have been in the past of having a blue in a team.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

"TOM THE PIPER'S SON"

By T. B. L. Sleigh, Ampleforth School.

"*Over the hills and far away!*"
Tom the piper's son
Played alone and played all day,
Other tunes learned he none.
"A foolish song, a silly air!"
His angry father cried.
"It earns no money at the fair,
No guerdon when the bride
Dances upon the wedding night;
But only moonstruck boys,
With rumpled hair and faces white,
Or a love-lorn maid enjoys
The wandering tune like their own wits—
Come play this after me!
A lilting dance, to pipe when sits
The May Queen under the tree."
But Tom with his eyes of dreamy grey
Looked his father in the face.
"Another tune I cannot play
For I know that God's own grace
Is with me when daily on the moor
Or over the bridge at night
I meet and play to a poet poor
Or a lonely love-lorn wight.
For tho' I cannot cure their pain,
Or direct them on the way
Up the blue hills and down again,—
Where they'll find their desire they say;—

Yet when I see their pace grow slow,
Their glances backward wander
Full near despair, why then I know
They need my song, and ' Yonder
Behind those hills lies the fairy vale
Where you will find your need,'
Say I, and let my song prevail.
Then their lagging footsteps speed,
And their gloomy eyes light up again,
And in light of sun or moon
They haste up the road nor for soles all sore
Care they, nor for bursting shoon ;
And I pipe till they're lost in the far away
And I know though I may not prove
That I saved a soul from its fate that day,
To seek on still for its love.
And so alone I play all day,
But ' Over the hills and far away.' "

THE MASQUE OF THE THREE BEASTS

By Peter Quenell, Berkhamsted School

(*This is absolutely serious.*)

SCENE I

Curtains. A KING (*not the conventional sort*), *a* COUNCILLOR, *a* SMALL DOG. *Enter three Beasts, trotting beautifully, and depart.*

KING

Where, where, do the three beasts go ?
Winds, coming from everywhere,
Going to everywhere,
They should know.

Perhaps they come from Syria,
The Cham, or Illyria,
Or the crocodile king.

In green caves sits Grendel,
Under the water.
Have they visited him, I wonder ?

In green caves, sits So-and-So,
Lord of the brigands.
Have they visited him, I wonder ?

Mayhap they go trotting,
To nowhere in particular,
To buy amber bracelets,
To hang round their curled tails.

(*To the* COUNCILLOR)

Small and round sits Tandel,
Playing on a flageolet.
He has a blue silk lining.
Go, and bid him
Ask the beasts politely
To stop and converse.

(*The* COUNCILLOR *goes out*)

(*To* SMALL DOG)

O the curl of a tail,
The occasional prance,
May be lost, dear Sir,
May be lost.
Go and implore them with weeping.

SCENE II

A mountain . . . cold and windy. The BEASTS, TANDEL, *and the* SMALL DOG.

TANDEL

Dear beasts, you're so delightful,
A charming curl of the tail,
A melodious trot,
Are things quite poetical.
Stop here for ever,
And let us talk
As wisely as possible.

(*The Beasts, quite politely, take no notice and trot out*)

Scene III

The King *and the curtains.* Tandel *is shaking his head.*

King to Tandel

Horrible person,
Less than nobody,
Worse than nobody.
Saucer eyes—
Hair like shavings—
And belly—
And horrid pomposity—
Stab you?
Throw you down the staircase?
I might
If I thought you'd do it gracefully,
But you wouldn't.
You'd bounce.
Go away!

(Tandel *walks out, in a limp state*)

The King *laments in a sing-song voice:*

I shall never console myself
With clouds, cuckoos, or small ivory beasts.
Dandelion clocks or camphor
Will make me lament afresh.

Sitting among foxgloves,
In a small wood clearing,
Someone with goat legs will see them,
Crossing the clearing with divine trottings.

But he will forget about them,
And so I shall go on lamenting.

Battles or duels or falling turrets,
Or, indeed, small pieces of polished green
thunder,
Will be their very sad end.
But still, the ghostly tail curled com-
placently,
Over a windy hill, in the evening, they'll
trot and disappear.

A DECEMBER EVENING

By B. A. Murray, Charterhouse

THE slow sun sinks behind the hill
Outlining trees against its light,
Gaunt skeletons, whose branches white
With powdered rime stand sentinel.

An evening mist across the park
Rolls softly, folding in its veil
Trees, banks, men's figures ghostly pale
That fade into the growing dark.

The moon comes out : the skaters seem
Of silver, by her cold light kissed,
Like fancies dancing in the mist,
Under that magic-making beam.

The moving figures swiftly pass :
The night grows clearer with the cold :
The moonlight makes a path of gold
Across that shining sea of glass.

THE GAMBLER

By F. W. Hawkes, Dean Close School, Cheltenham

CARE I no jot those whispers, " He is dying " :
Fate is but Fate whatever man foretell :
Death a chill hand the knot of life untieing,
Life is a hell that leads but unto Hell.

A dreamer in the dreamland of caresses,
I sought to bind my Paradise to earth ;
But love, who mesh'd me in her golden tresses,
Died for her babe that she might give it birth.

A fool, when nature gave me of her healing
I left that bud beside the wither'd rose,
And to the world held wide my arms appealing :
Pleasure forgets the craving for repose.

A fool, I whispered to the lips of folly,
And sought for laughter in the tears of sin :
A kiss, a dream sufficed my melancholy,
Bright eyes, red lips, slim fingers beckoning.

THE CLOCK

By R. de C. Matthews, Dover College

He rules
Our lives
With rod
Of iron,
Nor knows
Our joys
Nor heeds
Our fears.
The sent
Of God
Is strong
And stern
And moved
By time
And not
By tears.
Beneath
The hand
Of this
Our King
I too
Have bent
The back
In woe,
To go
The way
Of ev'-
rything,

The way
The sands
Of time
Must go.
But here
I pause
And may
Afford
A space
To bow
The knee
To some :
The pen
Is might-
ier than
The sword,
Less might-
y than
The pen-
dulum.

CITY OF THE FAITHFUL

By R. de C. Matthews, Dover College

O city of the faithful, wherewith shall we reward your faithfulness?
Ye waited long in days of much need: ye held your walls against many adversaries.
Inner foes also ye had: never had ye peace from your foes.
O city of the faithful, wherewith shall we reward you for your faithfulness?

Then were there many gathered together against you:
When some said, "Let us yield, and in time when we are stronger, then may we revolt,"
Ye denied them: "No, let us stand firm, and be an example to them that come after."
So ye withstood them long days: nights thirsty and void of sleep.

O city of the faithful, wherewith shall we reward your faithfulness?
Ye are slaughtered; your blood is spilled out over the ground, O ye brave and strong; overthrown are your towers.
Was it for nothing that ye died, suffering long ere ye came to death? Was your valour all vain?
O city of the faithful, wherewith shall we reward you for your faithfulness?

FRANCE

(A FRAGMENT)

By J. N. H. Marshall, Edinburgh Academy

In silver dusk beside the blue Dordogne
Wandered in dreams a sun-burnt shepherd boy,
Piping as softly as the whispering winds
That blow through murmuring woods in Gascony
A song of reapers gathering in the sheaves;
Of goatherds watching o'er their browsing flocks;
A song as plaintive as the sighing spray
Blown from the wind-swept crests of creaming foam;
As haunting as the dancing of the reeds
Beside some moon-drenched, starry shadowed pool.
Then as he piped, from out the sunset glow
Came straying, dim and fleeting as a dream,
A vision of the France of ages sped
When life was but a shining coloured toy,
And love was flowery sweet, and even Death
Went clad in garments of a merry hue. . . .

BEAUTY

By R. Ellis-Bagguley, Hymer's College, Hull

THESE are the wonder-things
Filling earth's span,
Bringing the beauty
Of life to a man.

Waters in moonlight;
Dew in the flowers;
Sunset and twilight;
Time-worn grey towers;
Voices in laughter;
Crisp curling foam;
Swallows in autumn
Winging back home.
White fingers rippling
O'er ivory keys;
Laces, old carvings,
Low drone of bees;
Swimmers all gleaming
Fresh from the wave;
Jewelled light falling
In the dim nave;
Morn—the awakening
Of fresh joyous days,
All nature ringing
With pæans of praise.

These are the wonder-things
Filling earth's span,
Bringing the beauty
Of life to a man.

THE POWER OF MAN

By S. B. Roberts, Hymer's College, Hull

A MIGHTY flashing column
Of shining, well-cut steel,
Darting up and down,
Turning a mighty wheel;
A distant whirr, and silent hum;
Hiss of escaping steam;
A hand goes out, a human hand,
And all is still.
Such is the power of Man.

A flash of light, of vivid blue,
Passes before the eye:
A sharp "click-click,"
A buzzing sound, as round they go,
Powerful light-giving dynamo on dynamo:
The blinding flash is tamed.
Such is the power of Man.

A booming crash, the livid flame,
The deadly missile hurled on high;
The choking fumes, the belching smoke,
Spued from out the cannon's mouth:
A sharp command, a little click.
Once more the heavens rend,
A lever pulled, a button pressed.
Such is the power of Man.

O beauteous sounds of Heaven endued,
O sweet harmonious sound of Heavenly choral strain,
A mighty chord ; a trembling note ;
A stop pulled out, a pedal down,
A booming note, full, strong, and clear,
Mighty as ocean's wave ;
The hand slides on ; the fingers move :—
A hushing song, a whispering sound
Soft as the dark blue night
When filled with stars and fragrant air.
Such is the power of Man.

NOVEMBER

By " P ", King's College School, Wimbledon

In the waste, in the barren place he shall bow low his
head,
His feet shall tread in the marshes ;
Alone with the grey chill rain, the falling leaves
brown and red,
And the cry of the waterfowl :
But in cold of body and sickness of soul he shall find
A hardness of purpose, freedom
From old things of sin and sadness, a shabby mind ;
And the warmth of a quickened heart
Shall wake him from death in the cold, dark waters,
Whither the leaves are falling, to float and rot.

UNBIDDEN GUESTS

By J. L. Hill, Lancing College

In the forest of my brain,
In the blackness of the night,
From the depths where they have lain
Hidden from my inward sight
Creatures strange and creatures gay
Crawl from out the brushwood thick,
Yellow, spotted, striped and grey,
Threading through the darkness quick
In and out, out and in.

Ravening with eyes of fire
Prowl they through the forest dim :
Ceaselessly they stalk, nor tire,
Swift of foot and lithe of limb,
Chasing up and down till morn
Through the pathways of my brain :
As one dies a new one's born,
Flying fresh and chased again
In and out, out and in.

Through the night they kill and tear
In and out the ghostly ways,
Splendid strong and flaming fair
Through the mad bewildering maze,

Till at morning's call they fly
Rustling like a rising breeze
Through the shrub they, cowed, slink by
Creeping softly through the trees
In and out, out and in.

SONG OF THE NIGHT

By W. J. W. Blunt, Marlborough School

ABOVE the twisted cypresses which hold
Their jet-black heads against the star-spik'd sky,
And borrow from the waning moon her gold
To trim the borders of their sombre gowns,
The night-birds fly.

The furry bat, enchanter of the night,
Sweeps on in ill-formed circles, and behold,
From time to time in his eccentric flight
His purple wings eclipse the dying moon,
And hide her light.

Silent, a meteor leaves the Pleiades,
Lighting the sleeping lily as it falls,
And then is lost to sight, while through the trees
The learnèd owl across the garden calls
" Tu-whit, tu-whoo."

THE GIPSY

By Colchester Mason, Perse School, Cambridge

ONCE as I tramped the road from Wendover
I met a gipsy pedlar and his maid ;
He was a black-browed, cold-eyed, sullen brute ;
But all the fires of hell were in her eyes :
She wore a crimson robe, a sable sash ;
And the long black locks of hair about her waist
Were caught within a chain that girt her round ;
Her lips were scarlet ; she was meek to view,
Fondling their toys and stuffs with listless hands :
But I have watched her when her partner slept
Dance round the dying fire where they by night
Would rest them ; and she leaped like a wild thing
Among the leaves and branches : stained the air
And seemed a very flame in the dim light,
The dim uncertain light of the fire's death.
I watched her, and a faint mist caught my eyes,
Till, in the dizzy dreaming trance, it seemed
All glory and all beauty that had been
Were once again in one brief space rehearsed
As I stood by. Such sight I never saw
But as in visions, wandering discontent
I sought for splendours that shall be no more,
Where rotten sedges and dull meadowsweet
Left a slow sickly vapour in the air.
So the brain reeled, the senses all grew dim
And magic sights arose to tune the heart
With all in fancy that is beautiful.

Still, still, I dreamt and still the maid danced on.
Then suddenly dawn came, and I was alone,
And huddled in a blanket at my feet
Lay the dumb figure of the gipsy girl
While the last ashes smouldered, died, and sped.

NOTHING

By Colchester Mason, Perse School, Cambridge

NAUGHT the bright banquet and the minstrel's mirth,
Naught the wide fields and the slow year's increase ;
The crimson-bosomed clouds that never cease
To paint wild pageants over the dark earth,
The dream-maid, and the sudden startled birth
Of wayward passion—then the long release ;
The after-years, the weary frame at peace
Crouched over the dull embers—all is worth
Nothing. Then if our sighs and griefs be naught,
If smiles and tears alike be only breath,
Falsehood and truth the sport of this life's whim,
Echoes and shadows only—no less dim
Than the still after-life of after-death—
Thank God for this rich Nothing He hath wrought !

A BALLADE OF HARLEQUIN

By Terence Prentis, Perse School, Cambridge

EVER so moonstruck and fantastical,
More serious Reason never be essayed;
Wanton imagination holds him thrall,
And cold convention leaves him undismayed.
He has heard haunting murmury that portrayed
The very end of sound; and dreaming thus
Of prosing Time's dark mantle disarrayed,
Age after age he mocks and gibes at us.

Ever the laughing look, whate'er befall,
The heart that shows no wound, although betrayed;
Laughter like the sea, that triumphs over all;
The laughter of the gods, by Death inveighed,
Dwelling, a gift divine, in man and maid;
The hand high scattering and life hazardous.
Haughty and mirthful, still by laughter swayed
Age after age he mocks and gibes at us.

Ever smiling, splendid and spangled all,
See Harlequin pass in the masquerade:
Dances a while in frenzied carnival;
Then leaves, in mind to give sad serenade
To Columbine. Mad plans of conquest made,
Woos her and wins her;—soft words amorous
Poured in her trusting ear—and then betrayed;—
Age after age he mocks and gibes at us.

Prince, in these iron days of cannonade
It seems that fantasie is fabulous,
That Harlequin is dead, his spirit laid :
Yet age on age he mocks and gibes at us.

MUMMERY

By Terence Prentis, Perse School, Cambridge

CALL me my slaves. Bring them to me,
Jet-black Nubians,
Darker far than the night-black sea :
Bring them to me.
Bring red wine, in a white bowl :
Scarlet and ivory
Redder than the crimson aureole :
Bring me my bowl.
Gather for me white lilies rare,
Fresh picked and pure :
White clouds in the unhurried air
Are not more fair.
Fetch me some grapes on a grey plate,
Silver and jade :
A rich offering immolate
On a grey plate.
Find me a swarm of golden bees
Velvet and gold,
Fresh blushing from the summer breeze,
Lingering bees :
Play to me music, soft and sweet ;
Haunting it sounds.
Sweep your strings soft, with fingers fleet :
Sounds it not sweet ?
Dull this sharp pain. Drive away care
Time alone can.
Poor fool, shake your bells in the air—
Drive away care !

CREATIVE EVOLUTION

By D. R. Gillie, Rugby School

UNENDING across Chaos swept dead winds,
Driving dense clouds against unending cloud.
Vast thunders roared amidst drear hurricanes,
And lightning flashed, unlighted, down through space,
To startle the immeasurable death
Of unborn life. Yet was this emptiness
The womb of Time, Birth, Growth and Beauty,
Love and Death, the glories of our being.

When myriad cycles of unmeasured age,
Falling and falling to eternity,
Had passed and yet the coming stream was full,
Unchecked by dam of the recurring years,
A pang stabbed through the roaring wilderness:
And then a silence, first that ever broke!
More awful than the tumult of great wars,
Of quaking realms, or the moan of planets
Stunned by the shock of battling in lone space.
There sprang from out the living depth of death
A flame; what say I? not a flame,
A quivering sea of light, a Death! a Birth!
A glory and a thirst for Life's beginning!
So terrible, the light had blent the Gods,
And scorched the sun to blackened agony!
It drove its shafts as wedges through the night,
Tearing apart the blear-eyed companies,

Piercing its way through thunder-tossing clouds
And sorrowing o'er the emptiness of space.
But yet this light,
Coreless and boundless to a mortal view,
Was all but lost in the infinite of space:
Like one small candle on the altar steps,
Lost in the contemplative shadows dim
Of a cathedral grey.

Across this waste of warring elements
Passed, like a morning breeze among green boughs
Rippling the leaves against the newborn light,
The first long breath of deep creative love
Which dwells for ever in the womb of things,
Stirring, called forth by that wild spasm of Light
Which first showed Death. With its warm, living touch
It roused the deeply hid capacities
Of unformed worlds. It set the empty mass
On the dim threshold of adventuring life.
It breathed on mists, until a cloud of sparks
Flew up against the darkness of the night;
Revolved they, great cascades of myriad flames,
Until a circling world of crimson fire
Sprang forth. It cooled, and thick grey mists came drifting.
Oh! to see that first of all Dawns' glory,
When the great sun, like a young charioteer
Who flashes through a crowd in radiant life,
Lit a cold sea, and first the flash of foam
Gleamed through the sea fog, hovering gloomily,

And parting now, and now again, to show
Tall cliffs of rugged granite, tenantless.

But soon this world grew warm with uncouth birth
Of towering dinosaurs, embattled beasts,
With white teeth running gore of other kind,
Their prey, who crouched deep, peering through the grass,
Tall amber-coloured grass, bowing and swaying
In a long-stilled wind, perfumed with unknown flowers.
While in the air hung hovering in their tribes
Vast winged forms, batlike, with tossing beaks,
Curved and sharpened like a swift-swung scythe,
White-gleaming like hot steel before it melts.
Their eyes of many colours strange were blent,
Rolling their irids of voluptuous greed
Round their keen yellow pupils bright with lust.
Deep in the groaning mysteries of the earth
Crawled slowly on their way vast phosphorous slugs,
Leaving a trail of silvery green flame
That hung a moment on the slimy rocks
And fled. A mighty sea curveted wild
Upon tall splintered rocks of granite grey,
Streaked with foul weeds, yellow and green and blue :
While through the waves peered heads with twitching jaws
And feelers long, that glimmered on the crests,
Lay tossing idly on the straining sea.

And then passed ages, world upon world went by,
And tribes died out and others rose and fell.

Yet still came change, growth and development,
And still was woven the eternal web
Of overbearing strength and gentleness.
At last, when dreary on the forest leaves
Came tapping with incessant tread the rain,
Took refuge in a cave the mighty ape,
Seeking to plunge 'mong incoherent dreams
Alone in silence, in unsullied dark.
His smouldering brain gave fire to mighty minds,
Far-seeing poets, deeply-visioned prophets,
Kings, and grey-haired old statesmen.
His heart, dull glowing, burst out in the flame
Of lovers dreaming of unnumbered joys,
And singing in the burst of new dawn light ;
And in the steadfast hearts of patriots
Dying uncared for in the misty hills.
Through him goes back the dim untrodden path
Down to the sea of chaos. He was first
Ever to catch the vision of the world,
Beyond our world, older than oldest Chaos,
From whose heart came Light and Love to speed us.

Look, O heirs of universal sorrow,
How great the dim powers of this mighty force,
That raised us from the waste of untried life
To this great present, wonder of delight !
Who gave us lakes, cool depths of cooler life ;
Who gave us mountains, like the great God's thoughts,
And sunrise breaking on them like His smiles :
Who gave us tangled brakes and forest glades,
Full of brown rabbits and their gentle young.

It gave us lawns, smooth, green for fairy dance
And flowers that pertly stare you in the face
Begging a smile to show your gratitude
For their sweet odours. So all this it gave,
And gave us intellect, that deep clear sea
Through which we watch the life of men like fishes
Darting in the deeps and swiftly passing
From shady weeds to sunlight, then to shade.
It gave us all that wider sea of life,
That louder tumult and that deeper peace
Of our imagination, and it gave
The hopes and longings that uphold our hearts
Striving to clear away the griefs, cross-webbed
O'er this dark world of fitful-gleaming right :
And even that deeper hope, which lends us wings
To rise from out this narrow prison, Self,
To other views, where even the world is small
And even the universe seems petty to us,
And we perceive alone the Infinite.

So have we climbed. God gave us strength to climb !
The way we have to travel is farther yet
Than the long path o'er which we have made our way.
The key to Being is locked beyond all life.
Eternity is but a Prelude. Aye !
Infinity is but a little step.
Clouds ring the summit, and the summit's but
A stepping-stone to further loftier summits,
Lost in the clouds of more eternities.

SEA-SHADOWS

By D. R. Gillie, Rugby School

Do you hear them beating ashore,
Wind-born visions and tales of yore ?
Faces that scowled from stranger ships,
Spitting threats from their cruel lips ;
The great ship with its dragon prow,
The lifter driving bull and cow,
The war-song like a thunderstorm,
And silent death like sea in calm !
Or tortuous traders in roaming bands
Who travelled to dim barbaric lands
In spray-swept ships, with Eastern balms,
Goblets and steel gilt-graven arms,
Red robes, skins of yellow, gold,
For which the timorous native sold
Tin, spoils of ardent forest-chase,
Or hounds, out-matching in their pace
The very seagull on the wing.
Lone stands the savage, watching go
The great ship, oars all beating slow
And steady down the lonely bay
As in the drifting mist they weigh
Their leaden anchor. Now they pass
The sullen, silent, sodden mass
Of stunted muddy islands tossed
As refuse from a land long lost.

Then—out upon the heaving sea,
Out with the sky on Neptune's knee,
Back to their southern sunlit homes
With marble gods and gilded domes.
They tell of searchers far and wide
For a land more free than the countryside
By the Grecian sea where the tyrant rules
And men are little worth as mules
That carry water to the gate ;
Seeking in distant lands to sate
Their visions of a homeland free
Across the whispering plain of sea,
Where shadows should not cross their lives
Of dim-lit dungeons and rusty gyves,
But only the clouds that flit
Across the sun when the oarsmen sit
Straining upon their benches.
And so they sail down wooded coasts
Past moonlit rocks, where sighing ghosts
Of shadowy waves break secretly,
And past the broad and lonely spread
Of fertile plains where the herds are led
By royal, snorting, red-flanked bulls.
Still each man for his freedom pulls
And sweeps the main for home and rest
And the warm hearth with freedom blest.
And so they pass before our eyes,
They that go where the seagull cries
And the waves moan and the wind sighs,
Sunned by the south, scourged by the north,
The toy of sea-gods in their wrath,

The prey of winds, the prey of calm,
Sons of freedom and fierce alarm,
Sons of valour and venture sweet,
Fathers ! we bow us at your feet !

ARCHÆOLOGY

By D. R. Gillie, Rugby School

To dig from mounds of Nineveh
Old fragments of forgotten things,
To catch some fragrance of the past,
Some warrior's ardour for the long-fought fight,
Some dark-haired princess' deep, sweet love of him,
To feel the life of ages dead and gone and dead,
That dream for me.

To see the tombs of Egypt's conquering kings,
Thothmes and Ramses and Amenotep,
To see them face to face, to touch their hands,
And if not, see their thrones, crowns, sceptres, all
That in their lifetime was thought fit for gods,
But now is naught but chipped, rubbed wood and stone,
That dream for me.

To finger treasures of Tyrinthian kings,
Stand where they stood, and watch the same green bay
Where golden galleys of Phœnicia rode
Bearing their purple dyes and robes for queens,
Their jewelled sword-hilts and their gilt-graved blades
And Nubian slave-mined gold from Mizraim,
That dream for me.

From some dim figure swathed in mists of time
To snatch the hiding veil, and greet as friend
A man who died six thousand years ago,
Menes the Tinite, or Semiramis,
Those whose great kingdoms, more than passed away,
Have crumbled dustward out of memory!
That dream for me.

LIFE

By H. G. Pollard, Shrewsbury School

A LITTLE longing of the limbs to run,
A little longing of the lips to kiss,
There will not be when Youth is done
Even this.

A little longing of the eyes to weep,
A little longing of the lungs for breath,
A little lying down to sleep . . .
This is Death.

LOVE MUST BE GOOD . . .

By H. G. Pollard, Shrewsbury School

I PASSED two lovers kissing in the rain,
Down that dark alley by the railway line ;
" Love must be good," I thought, " that it should shine
So brightly in their eyes beneath the rain."

When I came back they still sat in the rain,
Which fell unheeded on her upturned face. . . .
" Love must be good," I thought ; and stopped a pace,
And said, " God bless you " ; then passed on again.

THE SIGN-POST

By H. J. P. Sturton, Shrewsbury School

It's high above a blue, dark lake,
With a far, far view of the sea,
It's nothing much . . . just a rotten stake,
The trunk of an old, dead tree ;
It boasts no more than a single sign,
And weather has washed that clean,
. . . A smudge of paint, the ghost of a line,
There's all of the name that's been.
It stands alone on a mountain top
On a heather and bracken heath,
Above there's naught where the mountains stop
. . . Blue sky and blue lake beneath.
It's watched the wild moor fifty year,
And many a sun's gone down,
And some went bright, and some went drear,
And some with a golden crown ;
It's seen grey dawn, and it's seen black night,
Parched heat and wizening cold,
It's seen cloud-shadows chasing the light,
And sheep driven into the fold,
Travellers a few, and dogs and men,
Or a fox in the still, white snow.
It's heard the east wind scouring the glen,
And the north wind whistling low.
It's known dull thunder rumble away,
Lightning break over the plain,
White moons in the night, a sun by day,
Or the long grey wash of the rain ;

And many a shadow's lengthened out,
  And the crops came rich or poor ;
For it's fifty year or there about
  The sign-post's stood on the moor.

SEPTEMBER

By H. J. P. Sturton, Shrewsbury School

THICK shadows curl about September,
Folding, moulding, leaves half-dead,
And bleached in the wanton whirl of summer,
Rusted gold and rotted red ;
Quaking, shaking, the wild young boughs
Lash out in frenzied, quivering fright,
Mad to break the strange, drugged drowse
That whispers in old leaves at night.

Thick shadows curl about September,
The blue haze drifts along the field,
Vague song rolls over the earth, and passing
Frays and tatters down the weald.
Old leaves flit by as things long dead
In the wind that bare them . . . half-forgotten,
And those that once were green are red ;
That once were young are old and rotten.

Thick shadows curl about September,
Sighing, dying, leaves creep past,
Fade through the world, and come to heaven,
Weeping, sleeping . . . quiet at last.

LOVE'S LYRE

By M. K. le F. Hankinson, Tonbridge School

Love sang a little mournful air,
And Echo listened as he played ;
She marked how tall he was, how fair
And unafraid.

But Echo could not speak her love,
She whispered back his words in vain,
And, sighing in the trees above,
Mocked him again.

TO A DANDELION

By D. J. Moran, Tonbridge School

Oh, gay-hearted Spirit of time !
Oh, Spirit alive in a flow'r !
Old fluffy-locks, blow not away,
Stay an hour !

What shepherd of old Arcadie
Pluck'd thy tresses away one by one
As he cried : " She is false, she is true ! "
Under the watching sun ? . . .

Fate, you do queer, playful things—
You have planted the dandelion-clock
Among sand-bags and wire, over mines
That thunder and rock.

And the plaything of childhood is crushed
As manhood goes " over the top " ;
Oh, dandelion, fluffy with age,
When will they stop ?

GLOW ON FOR EVER . . .

By D. J. Moran, Tonbridge School

GLOW on for ever, aching thing at heart !
Long for the love you'll never find again,
That once came near, tempted and passed away.
Oh, fire of pain, ghost of love's fire, death-damped—
Glow on like dawn's pale mimicry of sunset,
That, having not the evening's full, soft light,
Mocks it at grey-time, in a cold dawn wind,
At first uncanny cock-crow . . . so glow on !
Let fools that play with verses, as a child
Lays block to block on a wet gusty day
Upon a nursery floor, ranging together
Dead verses cold and false like wood or stone—
Let them, in lying mask of poetry—
That glorious thing they cannot understand—
Beat hammer'd words, like the loud coffin-nails,
To tell of burning altars built to love. . . .
How I wish some of them might see, bound helpless
Upon a " burning altar," all they love
And moan damp-eyed of dying for . . . Light of Heaven !
Perhaps they'd understand that love is madness,
Hot tearing thing that screams aloud in hunger,
Starves, dies ! . . . and rotting stinks away for ever.

PALE LIGHT

By D. J. Moran, Tonbridge School

WHEN I see poor, pale sunset through the trees
Of dying autumn, when the evenings freeze,
The cold, sad light stares ice-clear in the West,
As though two Gorgon lips had freezing press'd
A kiss of death full on the passing sun,
While bitter-eyed Medusa's gaze had run
The slave of daylight through and through and
through—
Pitiless swords in eyes o' clearest blue . . .
And then the sun sinks down and light is lost ;—
Earth sleeps a sleep—like death, in everlasting frost.

1920: KEEP TO THE LEFT

By D. J. Moran, Tonbridge School

KEEP to the left and tread your hobnailed lightest;
There's someone underneath—no! not alive—
He's only one of those who broke their necks,
Thought it was fine—or otherwise—and fell,
Shuddered, lay still, sown in the ready soil!
The bursting shells had ploughed it up all ready
. . . Just one of those who melted in the smoke,
He cried, "That does me!—ugh!" then plunged and sank
Into a sloppy crater and arous'd
The musty things that curdled on the bottom . . .
Till choking bubbles giggled to the surface,
Smiled there and spat in fragments—so his life,
Smiling, had shattered into shards uncounted,
To scud in darkness on the gale of time,
Unknown, unseen, forgotten. . . . Mind the hole!

DYLAN THE DARK, THE SON OF THE WAVE

By D. J. Chitty, Winchester College

OVER the Ocean a sea-horse riding,
Foam-maned, fire-eyed, snorting in its anger,
Bore a god in the morning of the ages,
Dylan the Dark, of the Children of the Mother.

Black of the night were the garments that enrobed him,
Black the gloss of his hair that flowed before him,
Black the light of his eyes upon the wild waves,
Dark his song of revel in the west wind.

On the shore, on the cliffs that tower upward,
Stood the smith of the mighty gods, Govannan ;
Blue eyes brooding, gazing on the waters ;
Fair-haired, white-robed, singing to the Sun-God.

The wild waves heaving, rolling, crashing,
Lashed at the black rocks, their eternal foemen,
And at the Smith, the Wave-born, singing,
Hurled forth challenge from the wastes of Ocean.

Rose his great arm, mighty from the anvil ;
Rose his stout bow, cut from yew of Argoed ;
Swift as thought, in the lightning of his anger,
Sped the arrow straight upon the Dark One.

Up the river-mouth riotously rushing,
Wave of the tide-flow, fraught with wailing,
Bore a moan to the daughters of the Conwy,
Dylan's death-moan, echoing for ever.

Over the Ocean a sea-horse, neighing,
Foam-maned, fire-eyed, snorting in its sorrow,
Rode on lonely, rode without a rider,
Rode on reckless, piteously neighing.

Waves by Conwy on rocks and yellow beaches
Moan for Dylan, moan for the departed,
Lash the land of the slayer of the Dark One,
Lash the home of the power that betrayed him.

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